

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



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DANIEL J. WRIGHT, FRIEND OF THE COURT BUREAU MANAGER, NAMED A 'LAWYER OF THE YEAR' BY MICHIGAN LAWYERS WEEKLY

LANSING, MI, December 30, 2002 – Attorney Daniel J. Wright, Special Assistant to Chief Justice Maura D. Corrigan and Manager of the Friend of the Court Bureau for the State Court Administrative Office, has been named a “Lawyer of the Year” for 2002 by Michigan Lawyers Weekly.

Wright was one of 11 Michigan attorneys selected for this honor by Lawyers Weekly. The newspaper’s annual “Lawyers of the Year” feature singles out lawyers who have had a significant impact on the legal system. The paper states that it chose attorneys who are “involved in matters that raise challenging legal issues and otherwise furthering the profession’s commitment to the rule of law and concept of justice.”

The Lawyers Weekly profile states that Wright faced “two tough assignments this year overseeing the continuing implementation of a federally mandated child support computer system [and improving] the system’s responsiveness to those who must use it.”

Appointed as the Chief Justice’s Special Assistant in December 2001, Wright has focused on child support issues, including the state’s conversion to the federally-mandated Child Support Enforcement System (CSES), a computer module that permits tracking of child support payments on a national basis. In November, Wright was named manager of the Friend of the Court Bureau because of his experience with CSES and child support issues in general.

As of January 1, 2001, ten Michigan counties’ Friend of the Court offices had not converted to CSES, and the state faced millions of dollars in federal penalties. All ten counties, including Wayne County, converted to CSES by the October 1 deadline. Michigan now awaits federal certification of the CSES system. If certified, Michigan could recoup millions of dollars in federal sanctions that the state has already paid, in addition to avoiding future penalties. While CSES is managed by the state’s Department of Information Technology, Corrigan has said the system’s success “is a top priority of this Court.”

Michigan Lawyers Weekly noted that problems remained after the conversion, and that Wright “has been tackling these problems head on he’s getting results.”

Chief Justice Corrigan said Wright’s “Lawyer of the Year” designation “is very well deserved.

“When Dan joined the CSES effort, the initial conversion had taken place, but a number of counties experienced problems with the new system,” said Corrigan. “Dan crisscrossed the state to hear about these problems and find solutions.”

Corrigan credits Wright with improving communications among a number of groups involved in child support enforcement, including Friends of the Court, local prosecutors, and judges.

To obtain federal certification, Michigan’s counties must now convert to a final version of CSES; the deadline is October 1, 2003. Corrigan noted that Michigan faces \$142 million or more in federal penalties if all counties do not convert by the deadline. If Michigan succeeds in its efforts, it should receive a refund of \$36 million in federal penalties that the state previously paid.

“Dan has already done much to further the conversion goal,” Corrigan said. “At the same time, his leadership has helped remind everyone that the most important goal is serving Michigan families.”

Before becoming Special Assistant to the Chief Justice, Wright was a Commissioner of the Supreme Court, beginning in November 1989. Supreme Court Commissioners are responsible for reviewing and researching the over 2,000 cases that come before the Court each year.

A native of Detroit, Wright graduated in 1970 from Marquette University with a B.A. in journalism. In 1973, he received his law degree from the University of Detroit Law School, where he graduated *magna cum laude*. Wright worked as a practicing attorney from 1973 until 1989. He served six years with the State Appellate Defender Office in Detroit, representing indigent defendants in felony cases in appeals to the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court, as well as in post-conviction proceedings in trial courts all over the state.

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